

Treating atopic dermatitis (eczema)

Atopic dermatitis is a red, scaly itchy rash which occurs in individuals with a personal or family history of allergies. It is often seen in young infants but can occur later in life. In many individuals the condition improves as they become older. Unfortunately, there is no cure for atopic dermatitis. Controlling the itch is essential in managing the condition. Atopic dermatitis can be controlled with the following steps.

1. Environment

- avoid **hot and humid** climates
- avoid very **dry** climates
- keep your house cool at all times
- some individuals benefit from **dust mite avoidance**
- avoid direct contact with **pets, grass, leaves**

2. Clothing

- **cotton or silk** clothing is preferable
- avoid wool
- avoid tight / occlusive clothing
- use a **mild detergent** such as Baby Ivory Snow
- do not use bleaches or fabric softeners
- rinse your laundry twice

3. Food

- food allergies can be found in association with atopic dermatitis, but are **not the cause of atopic dermatitis**

4. Bathing and Moisturizing

- **tepid baths** followed by moisturizers are very helpful
- use **mild soaps** such as Dove unscented or Cetaphil
- after bath gently pat skin with a cotton towel, do not rub and **do not completely dry**
- **apply anti-inflammatory ointment / cream as directed on damp skin**
- then apply moisturizer to entire skin (including areas treated with anti-inflammatory ointment / cream) to trap water against the skin and hydrate it.
- moisturizers should be **unscented**
- **ointments and creams** (e.g. Vaseline petrolatum, Glaxal Base, Cerave) are better moisturizers than lotions

5. Medication

- **Anti-inflammatory corticosteroid ointments and creams** are effective in controlling inflammation (red, blistering, oozing or weeping skin).
 - for the face, underarm and groin you have been prescribed: _____
 - for the body you have been prescribed _____
 - apply these two times a day to affected areas, not to the entire skin
 - once inflammation has improved the steroid ointment/cream can be stopped, but continue with the moisturizer
- **Anti-inflammatory non-corticosteroid ointment and creams**
 - **Protopic/Elidel** - apply twice a day for 1 - 3 weeks at a time, then 2 times a week for maintenance.
 - **Eucrisa** - apply twice a day for 1 - 3 weeks at a time, then 2 times a week for maintenance.
- you may also have been recommended or prescribed antihistamines for the itching
 - You can use one of the following non-sedating antihistamines:
 - Reactine (cetirizine), Claratin (loratadine), Aeriuss (desloratadine), Allegra (fexofenidine), Blexten (bilastine) or Rupal (rupatadine)
- your physician may decide to place you on **antibiotics** if you have a bacterial infection on the skin.
- there are other medications and treatment options available for people with atopic dermatitis that is difficult to control; this can be discussed with your physician.